LIBRA ENSEMBLE
in association with Aphids and the
MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL
presents

Thousands of bundled straw

a song cycle in seven movements
by David Young
1997 – 2005

for

soprano
guitar
bass recorder
oboe / cor anglais
clarinet in Bb / clarinet in Eb / bass clarinet
trumpet in C
alto / tenor trombone
violin
viola
violoncello
contrabass
percussion
pianoforte

8.00pm Tuesday 18 October 2005

Iwaki Auditorium
ABC Southbank Centre
120 Southbank Boulevard
Melbourne, Australia

Thousands of bundled straw **I**, 1999
for clarinet in B flat & violoncello
ca. six minutes
commissioned by Ensemble 2000, Denmark
first performed by Libra Ensemble (Carl Rosman & Geoff Gartner), 2001, Melbourne

Thousands of bundled straw **II**, 1998
for bass recorder, oboe, trumpet, violin & percussion
ca. five minutes
commissioned and premiered by Tosiya Suzuki & ensemble for the 2nd International Recorder Festival, 1998, Amsterdam
subsequently part of the Aphids installation/performance, *Ricefields*, a collaboration between David Young and visual artists Rosemary Joy & Sarah Pirrie, 1998, Melbourne

Thousands of bundled straw **III**, 1998
for soprano, oboe, violoncello & pianoforte
ca. nine minutes
commissioned and premiered by Æquatuor (Matthias Arter, Ingrid Karlen, Tobias Moster & Sylvia Nopper),1998, Zurich

Thousands of bundled straw **IV**, 1997
for cor anglais, bass clarinet, tenor trombone, viola & contrabass
ca. four minutes
commissioned and premiered by Libra Ensemble, 1997, Melbourne

Thousands of bundled straw **V**, 1997/98
seven songs for soprano & guitar
ca. ten minutes
commissioned and premiered by Libra Ensemble (Deborah Kayser & Geoffrey Morris), 1997, Melbourne

Thousands of bundled straw **VI**, 1997
for soprano, oboe, clarinet in Eb, alto trombone, violin, viola, violoncello, contrabass & pianoforte
ca. nine minutes
commissioned and premiered by Libra Ensemble, 1997, Melbourne

Thousands of bundled straw **VII**, 2005
for soprano, bass recorder, oboe, clarinet in Bb, trumpet, tenor trombone, violin, viola, violoncello, contrabass, percussion & pianoforte
ca. eleven minutes
commissioned by Libra Ensemble

Tonight is the first performance of movement **VII** and of the song cycle in its entirety.

Composer's note

Thousands of bundled straw began with the myth of Yoichi as recounted in a tourist brochure from the Ichibata Yakushi (Temple of the Healing Eyes) in Shimane Prefecture, Japan.

Some 1100 years ago, Yoichi, a fisherman, found a stone statue of the Buddha floating on the sea. That night, the statue appeared to Yoichi in a dream, telling him that if he threw himself off a cliff, his mother—who was blind—would have her sight restored. The next day he wrapped bundles of straw around himself, and jumped off the cliff. Yoichi survived, his mother could see, and he founded the Temple of the Healing Eyes, which is there to this day.

In 1997 I walked the 1000 steps up the hill from Lake Shinji to visit the Zen Buddhist temple complex. It is said to house the original statue that Yoichi found and dreamt about. This statue is customarily hidden from view; displayed to the public only once every 100 years.

The text for the song cycle is inspired by various tourist brochures, biscuit packets, and the writings of Italo Calvino and Georges Perec. For example, the fifth movement, for soprano and guitar, echoes with fragments from Calvino's reflections on the turtle-love-making season in *Palomar*.

The third movement is a homage to Perec's *Life A User's Manual*, in which he describes an entire Parisian apartment block as encountered in a single slice of time. The novel moves systemically from room to corridor to stairwell to room.

The song cycle draws further inspiration from other works by Perec. His virtuosic novel *A Void* was written without any use of the letter 'e', and the English translation from the French also manages to maintain this restriction. *A Gallery Portrait* is Perec's short story about an art collector who commissions a portrait: this portrait shows the collector standing next to the very portrait he has commissioned, repeating and receding to infinity.

In addition to these literary sources, *Thousands of bundled straw* owes much to my many visits to Japan. I have always been fascinated by the mangled fragments of English often used in Japanese advertising (sometimes called 'Japlish'). Hence the title of the song cycle, which is quoted directly from the Temple of the Healing Eyes' tourist brochure. Somehow the slight shift in grammar creates a small gap, a fissure into which meaning might slip unexpectedly.

My humble thanks to the many people who have contributed to the creation of this work over the years; to the remarkable and dedicated musicians who have collaborated with me and shared their knowledge, skill and artistry so generously; to the Libra Ensemble for having the patience and tenacity to make this evening's performance a reality; and to Cynthia Troup for her unwavering support and constant inspiration.

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Libra Ensemble

Libra Ensemble has been a pacesetter in the promotion and development of young Australian composers, the presentation of recent international work, and the performance of rarely heard twentieth century repertoire. Since its inception in 1992, the group has presented twelve major concert series and has consistently received critical acclaim for insightful and beautifully executed performances.

Highlights in 2003 included three performances in Europe, and performance of John Cage's *Sixteen Dances* as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival's Sunset Series. A series of three concerts in Melbourne also included the premiere of Dominik Karski's *Streams Within* (commissioned by Libra with the support of the Australia Council) and the Australian premiere of Damien Ricketson's *Chinese Whisper* for chamber orchestra, as well as works by Chris Dench, Brian Ferneyhough, Mauricio Kagel, Olivier Messiaen and Paul Hindemith.

Libra encompasses a broad performer base, with individual experience ranging from the ABC symphony orchestras and specialist early music ensembles to jazz and music theatre. Its members are also soloists, many maintaining a busy schedule of national and international concert activities. Many of the ensemble's members are also skilled as teachers and regularly conduct workshops, coaching sessions and seminars.

To date the group has premiered new works by Australian composers James Anderson, Newton Armstrong, Brenton Broadstock, Chris Dench, Dominik Karski, Benjamin Marks, Matthew Shlomowitz, Michael Whiticker, Adam Yee and David Young. Libra has also introduced to Australian audiences works by Richard Barrett, Elliott Carter, Aldo Clementi, George Crumb, James Dillon, Franco Donatoni, Pascal Dusapin, Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Finnissy, Klaus K Hübler, György Kurtág, Josh Levine, Jason Eckardt, Jo Kondo, Keiko Harada, Tatsuya Kawasoi, Damien Ricketson, Giacinto Scelsi and Toru Takemitsu.

In the past few years, Libra's emphasis has shifted towards the presentation of smaller-scale events in Europe, with Mark Knoop now based in London and Carl Rosman in Köln. We would like to extend special thanks to Kristy Edmunds at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, to Arts Victoria, and to Rosemary Joy at Aphids, for their indispensable assistance in enabling us to present this first complete performance of *Thousands of bundled straw*.

libra ensemble

Deborah Kayser, soprano

Deborah performs in areas as diverse as ancient Byzantine chant, French and German Baroque song and classical contemporary music, both scored and improvised. Her work has led her to tour both nationally, across Australia and internationally to Europe and Asia. Her work in the early music genre has ranged from soloist in oratorio and large choral works to intimate chamber ensembles.

As a member of Jouissance, she has performed radical interpretations of Byzantine and Medieval chant, including the works of Hildegard of Bingen, Kassia, Romanos Melodos and Peter Abelard. With ELISION, highlights include works written specifically for her voice by composers such as Liza Lim (*Moon Spirit Feasting*), Richard Barrett (*Opening of the Mouth* and *Dark Matter*) and Chris Dench (*ik(s)land[s]* and *the blinding access of the grace of flesh*). With ELISION and Libra Ensembles, Kayser has premiered works by local and overseas composers, including Helen Gifford, Chaya Czernovin, David Young, Volker Heyn, Michael Finnissy and Jason Eckardt. She has sung theatre/opera roles in works by Liza Lim, Richard Vella and Michael Smetanin, and with the companies Chambermade, Theatreworks, and Aphids.

Geoffrey Morris, guitar

Geoffrey Morris has carved a unique path as a classical guitarist in Australia principally through his work in contemporary music. Many composers have dedicated their works to him including Aldo Clementi (*Ricercare* and *Otto Variazioni*), Brian Ferneyhough (*No Time (at all)*), Elena Kats-Chernin (*Little Piece of Gossip*) and Michael Finnissy (*Nasiye*). To date he has played in over 130 premiere performances and since 1992 has been a member of the ELISION ensemble. With Libra Ensemble, Geoffrey has performed many of the most important works in the twentieth-century repertoire including those by Gerhard, Boulez, Stravinsky, Webern, Henze and Crumb. In 2004, Geoffrey was awarded the prestigious Music Council of Australia Freedman Fellowship for classical music and is currently undertaking doctoral studies at the University of Newcastle.

Natasha Anderson, recorders

Natasha Anderson is a Melbourne artist working mainly with the unique combination of contrabass recorder, electronics, voice and mixed media. Since completing her studies at the Amsterdam Conservatorium, she has performed and devised works in a number of genres. Recent appearances range from performing at the Pompidou Centre in Paris with improviser Anthony Pateras to presenting a solo mixed media work in Berlin to playing with Richard Nunns - a leading exponent of Maori instruments - in Wellington.

Matthew Tighe, oboe

Matthew Tighe was born in Melbourne in 1972 and began oboe lessons at age twelve. He subsequently completed a Bachelor of Music at the Victorian College of the Arts where his teacher was Eve Newsome. He continued his studies with Diethelm Jonas in Trossingen and Emanuel Abbuhl in Rotterdam. Matthew has worked with the Melbourne, Tasmanian and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras. He is currently engaged with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra

Carl Rosman, clarinets

Carl Rosman is co-artistic director of Libra Ensemble, and also a member of musikFabrik and ELISION. He performs as a soloist across a wide range of repertoire from the Romantic period to the present day, specialising in the most demanding works of the contemporary solo repertoire. Works composed for him include Chris Dench's *ruins within* for solo clarinet in A, Liza Lim's *INGUZ (fertility)* for clarinet in A and cello, and Richard Barrett's *interference* for contrabass clarinettist also vocalising over a five-octave range. He was awarded a Kranichsteiner Musikpreis at the 1994 Darmstädter Ferienkurse, was an artist in residence at the 1995 Akiyoshidai Festival, and has since performed as a soloist throughout Europe and Australia as well as in the USA, Japan and South Korea. From July–December 2002 he was an artist in residence at Akademie Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart), returning for further residencies and performances during 2003-4. He now lives in Köln.

Tristram Williams, trumpet

Tristram Williams is the Associate Principal Trumpet of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He has a busy career in Australia and overseas as a recitalist and concerto soloist, and plays in ensembles such as ELISION, Australian Art Orchestra, and his improvised trumpet/electronics duo, MDF. Next year he will be giving the Australian premiere of the trumpet concerto, Jet Stream, by Peter Eotvos, with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in the Metropolis series in May.

Ben Marks, trombones

Ben Marks is a freelance musician based in Brisbane. He is a member of the ELISION Contemporary Music Ensemble and specializes in the performance of contemporary music, including collaborations with visual artists and free improvisation. He also performs with ensembles throughout Australia including Ensemble Offspring, Libra Ensemble, Southern Cross Soloists, Australian Chamber Brass Ensemble, and the Adelaide, Western Australian, Melbourne and Queensland symphony orchestras. Ben regularly gives solo recitals throughout Australia. He is currently teaching trombone and runs various ensembles at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University and is also teaching trombone at the Queensland University of Technology.

Elizabeth Sellars, violin

Melbourne-born Elizabeth Sellars made her concerto debut at the age of 13. She studied with David Takeno at the Guildhall School of Music and has been a multiple prize winner in competitions including the 9th Concorso Musicale Internazionale 'Riviera del Conero' in Italy and the Royal Overseas League Competition in London. Elizabeth has performed in festivals throughout Australia, South East Asia and Europe including the Berlin and Melbourne Festivals and has appeared at the Wigmore Hall and at London's Southbank as group soloist with the Philharmona. She has broadcast regularly on Australian national radio and has recorded for Naxos on the critically acclaimed De Falla, Berkeley and Stravinsky CDs. Elizabeth has been awarded an Australia council grant to commission and perform two new works by Dominik Karski and Julian Yu which can be heard at St Michaels Church on the 27 November at 2.30 pm. Elizabeth plays on a Eugenio Degani violin made in 1876.

Jason Bunn, viola

Jason Bunn has been active in the musical life of Melbourne for many years. He currently works full time with Orchestra Victoria, and performs with a range of other ensembles on a regular basis. In 2001 and 2002 Jason toured internationally with *The Theft of Sita* by Nigel Jamieson and Paul Grabowsky, which involved playing with a Balinese gamelan to accompany a shadow puppet show.

Jason has been a performer and supporter of Aphids since its inception, having participated in nearly every Aphids event since 1994. He has also been involved in a number of productions with Chamber Made Opera and Contemporary Music Events. Most recently Jason performed in Aphids' four-continent world tour of *Skin Quartet* to Sydney, Portland, Oregon, Brussels and Johannesburg.

Rosanne Hunt, violoncello

Rosanne Hunt began cello studies with her mother, Marianne Hunt, and continued with Christian Wojtowicz in Hobart, Anner Bijlsma in The Hague, and - with the help of an Ian Potter Foundation grant - with Irene Sharp in San Francisco. Her eclectic freelance life takes her from early music projects with the period instrument ensemble Arcadia, to new music with the ELISION and Libra
ensembles, chamber operas with Melbourne's Chamber Made Opera, and contemporary indigenous music with Richard Frankland's The Charcoal Club. She also teaches cello at Monash University.

Dorit Herskovits, contrabass

Dorit is active as both a freelance professional performer and teacher, Dorit's studies began in Sydney and continued in Switzerland and Germany. Dorit has served as Principal and front-desk player with Queensland Theatre Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and for eight years with the Australian Chamber Orchestra as Assistant Principal bassist (and occasional Principal) and is a founder-member of Paridoro Quartet. Dorit plays annually with the Melbourne Symphony and for Opera Australia as well as for commercial shows and touring artists.

Peter Neville, percussion

Peter Neville was appointed Head of Percussion at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2000 prior to which he freelanced across the range of musical styles. He has a special commitment to new music and as well as working with Libra and organisations such as Hutes and Chamber Made Opera he has been a member of the ELISION ensemble for twenty years. He is also currently a member of the groups Jouissance, the David Chesworth Ensemble, the Raga Dolls Salon Orchestra and The Coalition of The Willing.

Mark Kruger, pianoforte

Mark Kruger is a laureate of the Orleans International Piano Competition and has performed in several countries and throughout Australia on television and radio as a soloist and chamber musician. In 2003 Mark Kruger was the Artistic Director of ABC Classic FM's 'Melbourne Prokofiev Project' and recent performances include Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata, Chopin's 24 Etudes, Brahms' 2nd Piano Concerto, Ives' *Concord* Sonata, George Crumb's *Makrokosmos* Vol. I and premieres of new works by young Australian composers. Mark Kruger is currently a candidate for the Doctorate of Musical Arts degree at the University of Melbourne under Dr. Ian Holtham.

Mark Knoop, conductor

Mark studied piano with Stephen McIntyre at the Victorian College of the Arts and in Europe with various mentors including Herbert Henck, James Avery and Peter Feuchtwanger. He studied conducting in Melbourne with Robert Rosen. He performs as pianist and conductor and is co-artistic director of Libra Ensemble (Melbourne).

Mark has performed in New Zealand, South Korea, Mongolia, Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada and throughout Australia including the Melbourne and Adelaide Festivals, the Sydney Spring Festival and the 1997 ISCM World Music Days. In addition to his work with Libra Ensemble, he has appeared with such groups as ELISION Ensemble (Australia), Melbourne Symphony, Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt), the Kingston Chamber Orchestra, conducted Ensemble Offspring (Sydney) and ensembles of the Australian National Academy of Music.

With Libra, Mark has conducted premieres of works by Jason Eckardt (*Tongues*) and Benjamin Marks (*...à l'abîme béant*) and the Australian premieres of Elliott Carter's Clarinet Concerto (with Carl Rosman, clarinet), Hans Werner Henze's *Kammermusik* 1958, and Michael Finnissy's *Various Nations*. He also performed the Australian premieres of Finnissy's mammoth piano cycle *The History of Photography in Sound* and Richard Barrett's *Tract*. Now based in London, Mark performs regularly in a duo with cellist Christina Waldock, as a soloist and performing other chamber music. He is currently undertaking a recording for the METIER label of Chris Dench's thirty-year *Phase Portraits* cycle. Current commissions include a new solo work by Michael Finnissy and a major piece by Richard Barrett for clarinet and piano.

David Young, composer

David began composing around 1990, and his first composition teacher was Liza Lim whilst undertaking his music degree at the University of Melbourne. His music has since been performed in Australia, Europe, Asia, the United States, Brazil and South Africa in contexts ranging from concerts to music theatre and installation. As a composer he is preoccupied with exploring relationships between sound and image, employing intricate and often miniature formats in unconventional settings. The music has been variously described as 'musical origami', 'satisfyingly abstract' and 'quietly determined to be itself, an aural equivalent of seeing a world in a grain of sand'.

As artistic director of Aphids, David curates and composes for collaborative cross-artform projects. These have included *Ricefields*, an electro-acoustic installation/performance which toured Australia, France and Japan; *Radio 1*, a percussion/theatre event featuring the world premiere live performance of Samuel Beckett's radio play of the same name; and *Maps*, a music theatre film text collaboration between Aphids and Kokon (Denmark), with performances in Melbourne (November 2000) and Copenhagen (October 2002). In June 2003, Antwerp's Champ d'Action presented a retrospective concert of David's music at the Logos Foundation in Ghent. David was festival director of the 2002 Next Wave Festival, Melbourne's multi-contemporary arts festival which showcased new work by over 600 young artists. In 2004 David undertook a three-month Asialink residency with Bengkel Teater Rendra in Java, Sumatra and Bali, Indonesia.

David composed *Skin Quartet* in 2003, a collaboration with visual artist Louisa Bufardeci for digital film and acoustic string quartet. This year *Skin Quartet* toured to the Sydney Opera House; the Time-Based Art Festival in Portland, Oregon; Bains::Connective in Brussels; and the Wits University in Johannesburg.

David is currently working on music for BalletLab choreographer Phillip Adams' new work; and Matt Gardiner's *Oribotics [laboratory]* which will be presented by Aphids in association with Asialink in November this year.

Libra Ensemble
artistic directors Mark Knoop & Carl Rosman
www,libraensemble.com

Aphids
artistic director David Young
general manager Rosemary Joy
www.aphids.net

Photo by Yatzek
Hair & makeup by Rose Walsh

Front of house
Andrea Keeble
Jasmine Burnett
mY Trinh Ha
Peter Humble

ABC
Sound engineer Jim Atkins
Resource hire coordinator Patrick Kenny
Australian music curator Stephen Adams

Thousands of bundled straw will be broadcast on 105.9 ABC Classic FM's Up Late program presented by Julian Day, on 26 October 2005.

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